

LETTERS  
UPON THE  
ANNEXATION OF TEXAS,

ADDRESSED TO  
HON. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS,

AS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED  
IN THE BOSTON ATLAS

UNDER THE SIGNATURE OF

LISLE.

BOSTON:  
WHITE, LEWIS & POTTER, PRINTERS.  
1845.



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## INTRODUCTION.



The passage of the joint resolutions by Congress, appears to have engendered a general apathy among the opponents of Annexation. Why is it so? So far as the actual consummation of the act is concerned, we are as far from it now as we were prior to their passage. But the first act of the eventful drama has as yet been performed,—the second may awaken the people to sober reflection. Political impulses may for a time warp the judgment of the mass, but they will ever carry with them the elements of their own dissolution. With all the appliances of party, with forces flushed by recent triumphs and spurred onward by the spoils of victory, our opponents have been forced into conditional and guarded propositions. Before the subject is again presented to Congress, the fury of party will have exhausted itself in the disgusting struggle for office, and the people will begin to calculate the value of the Union, and the paltry prize for which it is to be jeopardized.

Keep but the subject before the people in its practical bearing upon the present and future welfare of the country—strip it of its party trappings—let it descend from the forum and gain a hearing at the domestic fireside, and a *joint resolution* will be echoed from every hill and valley to support the Constitution, and maintain the national faith and honor.

These Letters have no other recommendation than their practical bearing upon the question. Still I feel that the homely garb in which they are presented, will give them additional weight with the people. Should they be the humble instrument of presenting materials for other and abler hands to use, or awaken the public mind to the perils involved in the question, I shall be amply compensated for my labor.

LISLE.

## ANNEXATION OF TEXAS.

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### LETTER I.

*December 19, 1844.*

TO THE HON. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS:

Sir:—The result of the late Presidential election has made the admission of Texas into the Union a matter of probable occurrence. The manner and conditions are, fortunately, yet undetermined. Their discussion in Congress, will become a matter of deep interest to men of all parties—for, in the mind of every enlightened American, there is involved in the measure consequences of vital bearing upon the union and stability of these States. I shall offer no apology for the liberty I have taken, in addressing this series of letters to you; for I feel that none will be required. The commanding position you have assumed on this question, has, if possible, added to your fame as a far-seeing statesman, and to your reputation as a patriot and a man. No subject was ever presented to this people, of such fearful importance as this; nor one that has demanded a more careful and deliberate consideration; and yet, strange as it may appear, none was ever so little understood, or involved in such mystery and doubt. Indeed, I may go further, and say that there never was a subject offered for national investigation, under which such gross misrepresentation and deception have been practiced. Under these impressions, I cannot doubt that any information on this all-absorbing question will be favorably received, from whatever source it may be derived, or however humble may be the garb in which it is presented. It is my intention, in these letters, to present to the public a condensed statement of the conditions under which the early emigrants to Texas settled; the character of their titles to the land they occupied; the extent of the guarantees given by the Mexican government; the extent of the grants made by Mexico, and the state of Coahuila and Texas; the present validity of those grants; the extent of the

grants already made by Texas; to what extent the old grants of Mexico, and Coahuila and Texas, have been confirmed by the government of Texas; the actual boundary of Texas; the quantity and value of the lands that would be realized by our government by annexation; who are the holders of the Mexican and Texian land scrip; and the origin of the project. In the examination of these several points, will necessarily be included the political and geographical position of Texas; her ability to sustain herself as an independent nation; and the danger of her engaging in foreign alliances, prejudicial to the safety and commercial prosperity of the United States.

If the subject were one upon which the means of investigation were open to the public, I should not for a moment, presume that it was in my power to throw any new light upon it. But when I reflect that all the information, thus far exhibited, has been upon one side; that, blinded by the influence of party, a majority of our population have determined, at whatever cost, right or wrong, to possess that fertile and inviting portion of our continent, I feel it to be a duty which I owe to my country, to present the subject, as far as my abilities will permit, in its true light, and leave the decision to a people, who, however rashly they may act in the furtherance of party purposes, will not, in cool deliberation, sanction acts derogatory to the national character, and injurious to the public interest. I may be asked why the means of investigation are so limited, on this particular subject; and why our public men have shown themselves so deficient of information on a question of such great weight? I answer that such is the peculiar position of both Mexico and Texas, in regard to the publication of Journals, and works on Law and Statistics, that but few have ever been produced by their presses, and those of the most imperfect character.

The newspapers of those countries, particularly those of Mexico, are seldom received in the United States—and their contents, excepting the local news, are rarely republished. Independent of the fact, that the most important documents upon this question, are in the Spanish language, it should be remembered, that prior to the agitation of this question, they were of no possible interest to our citizens; and previously to the revolution of Texas, were considered of minor importance even by Mexico herself. Under these circumstances, it cannot be a matter of surprise that the existing relations of Mexico and Texas, and the true position of their public lands, should, in fact, be a sealed book to our most intelligent and enlightened statesmen.

These letters will be presented under an anonymous form, for many reasons which it would not interest the public to know. The desire of avoiding personal responsibility, is not, however, connected with them. Could my name, in my own opinion, give them additional weight, I should unhesitatingly affix it. Among my personal friends, the author will be easily recognized; and, as I seek no other remuneration,



neration for my labors than to be the humble instrument of a public good, the being publicly known, is a consideration I would sedulously avoid. If these letters, as they are from time to time presented in this paper, should not carry in themselves intrinsic evidence of their truth and candor, they can assume no additional value from any name, however elevated. With this exposition of my feelings and views, I shall proceed at once to the subject; asking of you, sir, and the public, that the imperfect manner in which I may present it, may be overlooked, in the importance of the matter.

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## LETTER II.

December 21.

Sir:—In the diplomatic correspondence of Mr. Calhoun with our representatives in Mexico, and the notes of Mr. Shannon to the Mexican Secretary of Foreign Affairs, that government is accused of having invited emigration to the country, for the purpose of defence against the frontier Indians—and of subsequently driving the colonists into a revolution by oppression. The question as to the right, or justification, of Texas, in her revolt against the central government of Mexico, has been, for all national purposes, settled by her success. The atrocious system of warfare avowed by Mexico, in her attempted subjugation of Texas, has proved to the world, that as a nation, she is totally unfit to govern a colony of the Anglo-Saxon race. With such a people, we, as an enlightened nation, can have no sympathy. Still, degraded and despicable as she is, we are bound, in our intercourse with her, to regard her as an independent nation—with rights as such, which we, as a stronger power, cannot honorably invade. The fact of her inviting emigration, is one of considerable importance to a proper understanding of her claims on Texas. If it should appear that she never contemplated, or authorized, such a class of colonists as eventually settled in Texas—and that, upon the discovery of the evil, she used all the means at her command to stop such emigration—and that the use of such means was the origin of the oppressive acts which drove Texas into revolt, although it would not affect the position of Texas, in the present question, as an independent nation, still it would go far to justify Mexico in the strong language she has used, in her diplomatic intercourse with the United States.

To a correct understanding of this subject, it is necessary to refer to the colonization laws of Mexico. The first law was promulgated by Augustin the 1st, (the famous and unfortunate Iturbide.) After proclaiming the necessity of a *general* colonization law for the empire, the first article declares—“The government of the Mexican nation will protect the liberty, property, and civil rights of all

foreigners who profess the Roman Catholic apostolic religion, the established religion of the empire." By the 16th article, it is made the duty of the government to provide the colonists with religious instruction. By the national colonization law of 1824, all emigrants were sworn to support the then existing constitution and laws, which declared the Catholic religion the only religion of the State, and all others as prohibited. The same law, article 4th, prohibited any colonization of lands within twenty leagues of the boundary of any foreign nation, or within ten leagues of the coasts. By the colonization laws of Coahuila and Texas, (decreed in 1825,) under which a vast majority of the land titles of Texas were issued, the same provisions are made. Article 3d reads as follows :

"The Ayuntamiento, in such case, shall administer to him (the emigrant) the oath which he must take to obey the Federal and State Constitutions, and observe the religion which the former prescribes—and consider him from that time, and not before, as domiciliated."

From the continual infringement of the above provisions, by the introduction of Protestant families, as early as 1827, the State of Coahuila and Texas issued instructions to the Commissioners of Land, in the following strong language :

"It shall be the duty of the Commissioner scrupulously to examine the certificates, or recommendations, which Foreign emigrants must produce from the local authorities of the place where they removed from, accrediting *their christianity, morality, and steady habits*—without which requisite *they shall not be admitted into the colony.*"

By the above provisions it will be distinctly seen, that no invitation was ever given by Mexico, except to Catholic emigrants—and that the introduction of Protestant families was expressly prohibited. In the enactment of the general law of Coahuila and Texas, Texas had a voice, by her elected delegates. No decided opposition was ever made by her representatives, to such provisions—from the fact, probably, that the imbecility of Mexico would not permit their enforcement. As no act could be legally performed unless the individual was an acknowledged Catholic, the most shameful profanation of religious ordinances was permitted. Marriage ceremonies were performed, a dozen at a time ; crowds baptized at once, at a trifle per head ; and the sacrament partaken, as a matter of frolic. Instead of none but Catholics being admitted into the Colony, no Catholics could gain admission into the Protestant Colonies ; or, if admitted, their position soon became so uncomfortable as to compel them to emigrate to other sections of the country.

This state of things was early seen by the General Government of Mexico ; and active measures were taken to suppress the evil. The Law of Congress, prohibiting the settlement of lands within twenty leagues of the United States, and ten leagues of the coast, without permission of the General Government, had been evaded, and considered as a dead letter by the Colonists. It was in the attempts made by the Mexican Government to enforce the laws,

which the Colonists had sworn to support, that the first opposition to Mexico exhibited itself. There is a Law of Coahuila and Texas, passed March, 1825, authorizing the sale of public lands, at auction, in which the following clause occurs :

Art. 10th. No person shall be molested for political and religious opinions, provided he shall not disturb the public order.

This is, I believe, the only instance, in the legislation of any of the States of Mexico, in which a law has been passed tolerating Protestants. Unfortunately for the Texians, this law was declared unconstitutional, and vetoed by the National Congress. Up to the period (1835) of the subversion of the Constitution of 1824, by Santa Anna, the efforts of the Mexican Government were unceasingly directed to the restoration of law and order, in the department of Texas. The restless Protestant spirit of the Colonists, however, could not be bent to Catholic rule. Every effort of the General Government, to maintain the authority of the legitimate laws of the colony, served but to exasperate, more and more, the population. Up to this period, the conduct of the Texians can only be defended, on the principle of the right of self defence against the proscription of Catholic intolerance. But for the overthrow of the Constitution of 1824, and the natural right she possessed, as an independent State, to resist the usurpation of Santa Anna, the world could not have justified her in her revolutionary struggle for independence.

I have gone thus at some length into the question—Did Mexico invite the colonists into Texas?—to show, that whatever may have been her political sins, she cannot justly be charged with the treachery urged upon her by our Executive. Her national colonization laws were general, and had no exclusive reference to Texas. Protestants were expressly excluded from a participation in them;—and, to this day, in the other States of the confederacy, they are excluded. That the influx of Protestants into a part of her territory has lost to her the fairest part of the Republic is her misfortune, not her crime.

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### LETTER III.

*December 26.*

In my last letter, I think I demonstrated from the colonization laws of Mexico, that she never invited Protestant emigrants to her territory—and that no Protestant could acquire a legal title to land under the laws she had enacted. When it is recollected how large a majority of the present holders of her land titles are not only not Catholics, but have never even gone through the forms required by the law, a

question will naturally arise, could the titles derived from Mexico, and the State of Coahuila and Texas, be maintained in the Courts of the United States, should Texas be annexed? It is to be presumed that our Courts would rule, that, where the original conditions of the grants had not been fulfilled, the grants would be void. It is a well-known fact, that, excepting Austin's old Colony, on the Brassos, and some of the military grants, not one colonist in ten has complied with the conditions of the law; and of the immense amount of floating titles now in the hands of speculators, not one in one hundred could be sustained under the Mexican laws. If the rules laid down in the decisions upon the validity of Spanish titles, in Florida, and French and Spanish titles in Louisiana, should be applied to the Mexican titles, now in the hands of Protestants and non-residents, many, who are now dreaming of realizing thousands from annexation, will find themselves sadly disappointed. In the discussion of this subject, however, I shall take the position that all the grants made are legal, irrespective of religious tests; and, where those grants have been contested by the Government of Texas, show, as clearly as possible, the grounds upon which they have been contested.

I shall now proceed to explain, in a concise manner, the nature and character of the Land Titles of Mexico and Texas. Previously to the revolution of Mexico, Moses Austin obtained of the Spanish authorities the privilege of establishing a colony of Catholics in Texas. He was, however, prevented from carrying his plans into execution, by death. Subsequently to his death, his son, S. F. Austin, applied to the then new Empire of Mexico for a confirmation of the privilege formerly granted to his father. It was confirmed by the existing authorities—and a settlement of three hundred families located on the Brassos River. The proceedings of Gen. Austin were confirmed by the General Government, and the title of the settlers made absolute *fee simple*. These are the only titles of the kind in Texas, derived from Mexico. A National Law was passed, in August, 1824—from which, to a clear understanding of the subject, it is necessary to make the following translated extracts:

ART. 1. The Mexican nation offers to foreigners, who come to establish themselves within its territory, security for their persons and property, provided they subject themselves to the laws of the country.

ART. 3. For this purpose the Legislatures of all the States will, as soon as possible, form colonization laws, or regulations for their respective States, conforming themselves, in all things, to the constitutional act, general constitution, and the regulations established in this law.

ART. 12. It shall not be permitted to unite in the same hands with the right of property, more than one league square of land, suitable for irrigation, four square leagues in superficies, of arable land, without the facilities of irrigation, and six square leagues in superficies of grazing land.

ART. 15. No person, who, by virtue of this law, acquires a title to lands, shall hold them, if he is domiciliated out of the limits of the Republic.

Under the powers granted by the above, the State of Coahuila and Texas proceeded to enact a Colonization Law, confining the privilege

to Catholics, as shown in Letter No. 2, restricting the approach to the sea-coast, and to the boundary of the United States, and confining themselves to the restrictions of the national law. Under its provisions, Undertakers, or Empresarios, were allowed certain limits, which are marked out on the old maps of Texas as grants—within which they were at liberty to introduce the number of families for which they might have contracted; the term of six years being allowed for the completion of the contract. The time, however, was, in many cases, extended by the State. For the introduction of one hundred families, they were allowed five sitios and five labors of land; and the same for each hundred up to eight hundred—above which number, no Empresario was allowed a premium. Each family, or single man, upon locating in the country, and complying with the law, was entitled to a given quantity of land, varying from one labor, (177 acres) to a sitio or league, 4128 acres. As an acknowledgment to the State, they were to pay “for each sitio, thirty dollars; for each labor, two dollars fifty cents, without the facility of irrigation; and three and a half dollars for each one that can be irrigated.” The full payments were not to be made until six years after settlement, and in instalments of four, five and six years. The titles of all settlers to be considered renounced, and the land taken possession of by the Government, if not cultivated, or settled upon within six years from the grant. The emigrant had liberty to leave the country, and sell his land, if he thought proper so to do—the purchaser, however, was required to fulfil the conditions under which the original grantee received it. Empresario contracts were made for even hundreds of families, no premium being allowed for any less number than one hundred, nor for an excess, unless they amounted to another hundred. The title of a settler was not, however, vitiated by the non-fulfilment of the Empresario’s contract. Some of the contracts expired, by limitation, before the declaration of independence by Texas. Others were in force; but the position of the country, and the legislation of the existing government, stopped emigration under them.

Under each of the grants, or Empresario contracts, more or less families were settled. Forms were established by the government, through which the emigrant must pass, before receiving a full title. These forms embraced so long a period of time, that but few titles were confirmed by the State, prior to the declaration of independence. One of the first acts of the government of Texas was, to close the land offices, and to require all sums due the government of Coahuila and Texas, as taxes or land dues, to be paid to the government of Texas—exonerating her citizens from all liability to the Mexican authorities. The only evidence of title received by the emigrant was the Empresario’s certificates, certified by the local authorities—and an order for a survey, or a certified copy of the survey, when made. Under these contracts, an immense number of spurious titles were issued—of which, and of other special grants made by the States of Mexico, I will speak in my next letter.

## LETTER IV.

*December 28.*

Sir:—I closed my last letter with the promise to designate other grants that had been made by Mexico, and the State of Coahuila and Texas, and to point out the immense number of fraudulent land claims that had been manufactured in the Texas speculation. The extraordinary haste with which this question is being pressed before Congress, and the evident determination of the leaders of the Loco Foco party to force the measure, whatever may be the ultimate consequences, admonishes me of the necessity of passing lightly over the minor points, and proceeding, at once, to the weighty matters involved in the question. It appears to me that there is a premeditated determination, both with the Government and its party leaders, to stifle, if possible, all investigation—obtain the annexation, at whatever cost—and leave the people to reflect, at their leisure, on the consequences of rash and hasty legislation. It is my intention to dispel, if possible, the more than Egyptian darkness that now hangs over the subject—and enable the people at large, as well as their representatives, to raise a warning voice.

In 1828, a grant was decreed by the states of Texas and Coahuila, Tamaulipas and Chihuahua, to Bradbourn and Staples, for the exclusive navigation, by steam, of the Rio del Norte, and the privilege of locating upon all the vacant lands on either side of the River. This grant was confirmed by the Federal Government for the term of fifteen years. A sail vessel, of a light draft, was fitted with a steam engine, in New York, in 1830, and sent out under the command of Capt. Henry Austin. The river was ascended, with great difficulty, at a high stage of water, about 700 miles. The navigation was found to be impracticable for a boat of any size, and the project was abandoned. The projectors, however, secured their claim by the experiment—and now hold it as good against the Mexican Government. Of this river, as the Treaty boundary of Texas, I shall speak more fully hereafter.

From time to time, since 1824, the Federal Government, and that of Coahuila and Texas, have made many military grants (so called) for services rendered the State. They vary from three to eleven leagues each. The papers certifying these grants were, in almost every case, copies of the originals deposited among the archives of the district in which the land was located, or where it was intended to be located. This opened a channel for the most extensive frauds.

Duplicate copies of these titles to grants could be obtained, to any extent, by paying for the labor of writing them off. Individuals had but to purchase an original title, and they could obtain as many copies to speculate upon as they might wish. A profitable trade has been, for years, carried on, in the southern and western States, in

this new species of merchandise ; and there are probably thousands, in the south and west, who, during the last political campaign, were hugging these fancied slices of the El Dorado, and hurraing for Polk and Texas. The facility with which an emigrant's papers could be obtained, under the *Empressario* contracts, and the ready sale their spurious titles met with, in the United States, drew a host of speculators into the business. Persons were hired at Natchez, and other places on the Mississippi, and also at New Orleans, to proceed to Texas, take the oath of intention to locate, obtain a title, and then return. These titles, thus fraudulently obtained, could not be distinguished from the genuine,—and their character can only be eventually known, when the unfortunate purchaser attempts to take possession of his land. I have previously shown that a title could only be valid, when the emigrant had located upon, and improved the soil. An immense number of these false head rights have been sold in this country, and are now distributed through almost every State in the Union. In addition to these, there are supposed to be fifty millions of acres in worthless titles, issued by the El Dorado company, Galveston bay and Texas land company, the Arkansas and Texas land association, and the Colorado and Red River company. The certificates of land stock, of some of these companies, have been sold at auction in New York, and elsewhere, to an immense amount. For some years, agents were employed to traverse the Western States, and sell their worthless paper at a cent, and even less, for the acre. Millions of it are now in the hands of our western mechanics and farmers who firmly believe that, if Texas is annexed, they can sell the trash that has been palmed off upon them, at two or three dollars the acre. I have little doubt that, in the State of New York, at least one-tenth of the voters are directly or indirectly interested in this scrip—and that it exists in large quantities in all the middle and eastern States. But a word of explanation is here necessary, to show the reader why the scrip is, as I have represented it. If the reader will turn to my third letter, he will there find a description of the *Empressario* grants or contracts. These land companies having purchased of the *Empressarios* the right of locating families upon their grants, and of receiving the commission of five per cent. allowed by the government for actual settlers, have assumed the title to the land in *fee simple*, and issued scrip purporting to give an actual title to land, for which they have never paid one cent, or fulfilled a single condition named in the original grant. These titles may be known, by being in decimal numbers of acres, such as, 100, 500, 1000, &c. No titles of such even numbers of acres have ever been issued by the States of Mexico or by Texas.

When it is borne in mind that this immense number of spurious titles, spread over the country, are over and above the bona fide titles actually acknowledged by the Texian Government, some faint estimate may be formed of the immense influence their possession

has had upon the late Presidential election. By official returns, made under the direction of the Congress of Texas, in 1838, it appears that the then existing land claims, of which the titles were good, amounted to about forty-five millions of acres. Since that period other titles have been brought forward, and extensive grants have been made by the Government. The exact amount, in acres, of the valid grants that have been made, since 1821, cannot clearly be ascertained from the records of the land offices. The situation of the country, and the careless manner in which the books have been kept, forbid anything like an accurate estimate. It is, however, somewhere between sixty and seventy millions of acres. Of this immense amount of land claims, good and bad, seven-eighths are held by citizens of the United States. Estimating these seven-eighths to be equal to one hundred millions of acres, let us, for a moment, pause to contemplate the strange spectacle it presents. The characters of the several titles are not known by the holders—nor can they be known, in most cases, without a long and expensive investigation. The holders, of course, believe them good. The price of much inferior land, in the West, is from one to two dollars per acre. We will, for illustration, set the value at one dollar. Here we have a direct bribe, operating upon the ballot box, of one hundred millions of dollars. Upon the election of a particular candidate for the presidency, depends the annexation of Texas. Upon that annexation depends the value or worthlessness of the property held. Can it, for a moment, be doubted, taking human nature as we every where find it, that it would positively and directly control the votes of the several holders.

Had human ingenuity been taxed to its utmost stretch, to devise a scheme that should insure the election of a particular candidate to the presidency, by indirect bribery and corruption, none could have been devised, more secret in its workings, or more certain in its results. None, where the power that controlled the will of the voter could so effectually operate, unseen and unsuspected. To what extent it has influenced the popular vote, can never be known. Still, I think that no true friend of his country—no advocate of the purity of the ballot box—can follow me through these hasty and imperfect letters, without acknowledging that JAMES K. POLK owes his election to the influence of Texas Scrip.

But I have said enough on this point. It was and is my intention, in these letters, to confine myself to documents and facts, and leave the more difficult task of illustrating them, to abler and more influential hands—reserving to myself the privilege of explaining, hereafter, more fully, the points hastily touched upon, should the discussion in Congress be continued longer than is now probable.

Beyond the grants I have already spoken of, there are others of immense amount, which have been repudiated by Texas—which, should the Treaty laid before the Senate be ratified, would, in my



opinion, be binding upon the United States. Of those, and the question of Boundary, I will speak in my next, and show, as I think I can, that, in case of annexation, the United States would not realise a league of land, that would be available for sales for at least a century to come.

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L E T T E R V.

January 2, 1845.

Sir:—By a decree of the State of Coahuila and Texas, dated April 19th, 1834, the Governor is authorized to dispose of four hundred sitios of the public land, to meet the expenses attendant upon calling out the militia to defend the State against the Indians. The decree recites the imminent peril in which the lives and property of the citizens were placed, by the incursions of the savages. By an act of March 26th, 1831, it is decreed, that the vacant lands of the State shall be sold at auction, under certain restrictions, and allowing Protestants to be purchasers. By a decree of 23d of April, it is provided that “after the lands are once exposed at public sale, with all the formalities provided in the law of March last, should there be no offer as high as the minimum price therein specified, they shall be open for any person to purchase them at said price, without the necessity of again opening the auction.” A decree of 14th of March, 1835, has the following provisions: Art. 1. “The Executive, for attending to the present public exigences of the State, may dispose of the vacant lands thereof, to the amount of four hundred sitios.” Art. 2. “He shall regulate the colonization of said lands on the basis and conditions he shall judge proper, without subjection to the provisions of the law of the 26th of March, of the last year.” All these decrees, it will be borne in mind, were passed by the Congress of the State, while the Department of Texas was fully represented in that body; she standing, in regard to the whole State, in almost precisely the same situation that Maine stood to Massachusetts, prior to her admission into the Union. No protest having been made by the representatives of Texas against the decrees, nor against any executive action under them, until after her declaration of Independence. To meet the expenses attendant upon the defence of the State against the Indians, and pay the troops called out in the numerous *Pronunciamientos* of that period, the Executive, under the above provisions, made a sale to John T. Mason and others, of eleven hundred leagues of land, for which the contracted price was paid to the government, it being, in fact, the only land for which the government have ever received the full stipulated value. These contracts, or sales, are repudiated by the government of Texas, in the 10th article of the general

provisions of the Constitution, on the grounds that the purchasers were not citizens of Mexico, and that the grants were repugnant to the general colonization law of 1824, as decreed by the Federal Government. I have, heretofore, shown that the same objections could be made, and with equal force, against all the grants made, through *Empressarios*, by the State of Coahuila and Texas. I will not question the right of Texas, as an independent nation, to invalidate such grants; for we have instances of repudiation, of somewhat similar character, among our own States. But how far they would be binding upon the United States, in case of annexation, is a question of great moment. In the returns made by the government of Texas, of the amount of land granted and donated by the Mexican and Texian authorities, these immense sales are not included; nor are the eleven league grants, located within ten leagues of the coast, and twenty leagues of the United States—they, also, being contrary to the provisions of the law of 1824. Should Texas lose her identity as an independent nation, by being annexed to us, her constitution and acts of repudiation must, as a matter of course, become a dead letter. The right or justice of all land claims must be considered, under the existing laws of the States of Mexico.

It is not for a moment to be presumed that either Mexico or Texas would enter into a negotiation with us, unless under a guarantee on our part that all legal titles to land within the territory should be confirmed. In fact, such is one of the leading provisions of the Treaty negotiated by Mr. Tyler, and laid before the Senate. These immense grants, made as they were under the sanction of Texas herself, acting through her representatives in the Congress of Coahuila and Texas, although repudiated by Texas, as an independent nation, would and must be, in justice, binding upon these United States, unless otherwise expressly provided for. The people of Texas, and the scrip-holders in this country, are too deeply interested in the confirmation of their titles, to permit any negotiations that shall invalidate them. And Mexico, provided she is ever brought to confirm the cession, or to agree to a common boundary, will take care that she burthens the concession with every possible claim that can be brought. It will be borne in mind, that in the repudiation of the titles of this immense quantity of land, Texas was acting in self-defence. Her position, at the period, demanded that every means in her power should be used, to attach the residents to the soil, and to identify their interests with hers. The then existing grants, under the Mexican authorities, covered nearly every acre of her available land. Without money, or a provision of any of the materials of war, she could only look to her public lands for the means of defence. The profuse and reckless decrees of the State of Coahuila and Texas, passed in opposition to the National Colonization Law, (although her own representatives performed a prominent part in their passage,) offered the most available means of clearing off the incumbrances upon her public domain. The individuals, too, who constituted her national assemblies, were

large holders of land. The vitiating of those titles gave a great increase in value to theirs. The justice of their repudiation, under the circumstances, had but little weight. They had entered into a contest, which could only be carried on by exciting the cupidity of adventurers, with the offer of a distribution of the soil among those who should successfully defend it. Should she remain an independent nation, the policy of the measure could not be questioned, whatever might be said of her public faith. But should her nationality become extinct by annexation, we should be compelled, in good faith, to confirm these titles, even if they were not forced upon us, as concessions of Texas, while forming an integral part of Coahuila and Texas—or as claims for which Mexico would be bound to provide, in a treaty of assent and boundary.

I stated, in my last letter, that the amount of existing land titles, acknowledged by Texas, was between sixty and seventy millions of acres. I will, in my calculation, suppose it to be sixty-five millions. Let it be borne in mind, however, that the acknowledged existence of such an amount of good titles is not only no proof that it embraces all, but is in fact a proof that claims exist to a much greater extent. Titles, to an immense amount, have already been thrown out by the land offices; many of which titles are now in litigation in her Courts—and many more would be, but for the cost and difficulty of their prosecution. It is well known that titles for many millions of acres, presumed by judges to be good, are now floating in the United States, which have never been presented for examination or confirmation. These may swell the amount to an extent, not even suspected by the Texian government. I know, from the manner in which business has been conducted in the several land offices of Texas—as a Colony, State, and Independent Nation—that no estimate near to the truth, can be formed, of the quantity of land sold and donated. Prior to 1836, there was no regular system, either of record or survey.

However desirous the Government may have been to establish order and system in her land department, it could not have been done in half a century, with the means she has had at her command. We have, then, good reason for supposing that the actual claims will much exceed sixty-five millions. To that amount are to be added the claims I have designated as repudiated by Texas. I have not the documents before me to show the number of grants that have been located within ten leagues of the coast, and twenty of the boundary of the United States—but, if the reader will run his eye over the map, and observe the extent of territory included in the limits, and bear in mind that, from its location, it is the most valuable portion of her territory, he can form an idea of the extent to which it has been shingled over with surveys and titles. I will call these claims fifteen millions, which is undoubtedly a small estimate—making the entire land claims of Texas eighty millions of acres, without reference to claims not yet presented.

Having thus examined the character of the land titles, and made

what I consider a fair estimate of the claims upon the public domain of Texas, I will next proceed to show what are the limits of Texas proper, from the best authorities—what claims she has to the boundary established by her own act of Congress—the almost utter impossibility of Mexico's ever acceding to the Rio del Norte as the boundary—and that the land-claims designated above, will more than cover every acre of available land.

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LETTER VI.

*January 14.*

STR:—The boundaries of the several States of Mexico have never been accurately settled. Acts have been, from time to time, passed by the different States and Departments, and Commissioners have been, in several cases, appointed to mark out boundary lines; but the nature of the country, fear of robbers, and the constant liability of molestation from wandering Indian tribes, have effectually prevented any definite action in the matter. I believe that no map exists, upon which the limits of all the States and Departments are delineated—and, even in those deemed the best authority, which have traced the outlines of the States bordering upon the Gulf of Mexico, no two agree. The only authorities, therefore, that can be safely relied upon, to settle the question as to the extent of Texas proper, are the acts of the Legislature of Coahuila and Texas, and the limits over which, by the acknowledgment of the other States, she held undisputed sovereignty. The boundary line, dividing Texas from New Mexico or Santa Fe, on the North, has, in almost every map, been run along the banks of the Red River—yet in the acts of the two States no such limits are named. In fact, from the country being unexplored, and in the exclusive possession of the Indians, each State has considered its limits, North and South, as indefinite. So, also, on the West, in the boundary between Texas, Santa Fe and Chihuahua, no lines have been drawn; and the territorial limits are only known by conceded right of jurisdiction. What, then, are the limits of Texas, as understood by Coahuila, and by the adjacent States? In the official report of Gen. Almonte, (now the Minister of Mexico to the United States,) who was appointed by the federal government, in 1834, as Commissioner to settle the difficulties then existing between Coahuila and Texas and the government, he states that Texas proper is situated between 28 and 35 degrees north latitude, and 17 to 25 degrees longitude west of Washington—making the southern boundary north of the mouth of the Nueces river, and the northern north of the Red river—intending, most probably, the river as the

line; and in the west, taking in part of what has been usually considered the territory of Santa Fe. These limits will give near 170,000 square miles, or 109,000,000 of acres. In the Legislative acts of Coahuila and Texas, the boundary of Texas, as a Department, commences at the mouth of the river Aransaso, the first stream north of the Nueces; follows the river to its source; thence, in a line, to the junction of the Medina and San Antonio, near Bexar; and, following the Medina to its sources, thence, in a westerly line, to Chihuahua.

The reader will see, by a reference to the map, the large extent of country embraced between this boundary and the Nueces. Mrs. Holly, in her work on Texas, written and prepared for the press prior to the revolution—and which, from the fact of its having been dictated and arranged by Stephen F. Austin, the pioneer of the settlement, may be with safety considered as the best evidence that can be offered, for all the claims of Texas—gives the boundary as follows:—

“It is situated between 27 and 33 deg. 30 min. north latitude, and 93 deg. 30 min. and 99 deg. 30 min. west longitude. Its boundaries are the Red river, separating it from Arkansas, on the North, the Gulf of Mexico, on the South, the Sabine river and Louisiana on the East, and the river Nueces, separating it from Tamaulipas and Coahuila, on the West—and comprises nearly 200,000 square miles of territory.” Its extreme length, she says, is 450 miles, and breadth 400. This, allowing it to be a rectangle, would be but 180,000 square miles, or 115,000,000 of acres.

This evidence, from the most just and distinguished man that ever trod the soil of Texas—one who, if he erred at all, would be most likely to do so in enlarging the territorial extent of a country to which he had, for years, devoted every energy, both of mind and body—ought to be conclusive, in the mind of every unprejudiced citizen, as to the extent of Texas proper. These calculations are, however, in my opinion, above the actual quantity of land within the old limits of Texas. I will, however, assume them as the basis of my remarks. It should be borne in mind that these calculations cover the whole surface—water, mountains, &c. Before proceeding to the consideration of the enlarged boundary of Texas, as assumed by her act of Congress—and which the friends of annexation claim as the territory to be actually acquired by the measure—I shall proceed to show what would be the quantity and value of the public land acquired by these United States, should annexation take place. I shall, no doubt, be asked why I confine Texas to the limits above named. I answer that, under no circumstances, can these limits be materially changed, unless by a war of conquest against Mexico. The acquisition of Texas proper may be looked upon by the powers of Europe with indifference—but the dismemberment of Mexico, as a nation, is another question; and that she will be dismembered by an enforcement, on our part, of the Rio Grande boundary, no man can doubt, who is at all acquainted with the present situation of Mexico. But, upon this point, I shall speak more at length in future numbers.

For the purpose of being distinctly understood, I will detain you a moment, with a concise description of the topography of Texas. Along the Gulf of Mexico is a strip of land, from thirty to fifty miles wide, that, with slight exceptions, is low and alluvial. The borders of the streams that pass through it are well wooded, to the extent, on an average, of five miles back. Between these streams are vast tracts of low prairie land, without irrigation, unfit for cultivation, and considered of so little value that they are never located upon, except in connection with the woodland. These comparatively waste lands constitute about one half of the belt of low land bordering on the Gulf. Back of the low land is what is usually called the rolling land, extending to the mountains, a distance of from one hundred and fifty to two hundred miles. Much of this range is, from want of water, and other causes, totally unfit for cultivation. Back of this is the mountain region, which will not probably be settled for centuries to come. I have shown from the best authority—that of Gen. Austin—that Texas does not contain over 115,000,000 acres. From this area should be deducted the water and waste land, which would reduce it to less than 100,000,000. I have before shown that the acknowledged land claims exceeded 80,000,000 of acres; leaving but 20,000,000 of acres now undisposed of. While there is no country on this continent that possesses land of such excellent quality as Texas, there is none that has comparatively so large a portion of that which is worthless. I shall be borne out, by every Texian, in the assertion, that at least one third of her soil is so destitute of water, that it cannot be used for agricultural purposes. All the land of any value, both in the low and rolling country, has long since been surveyed and taken up—at least to such an extent that all late surveying has been done far in the interior, and a large part of it out of Texas proper. An English surveyor, who had been three years in the country, and constantly employed, assured me, nearly a year since, that there was not a league of land unlocated, within two hundred miles of the Gulf, that was worth the cost of a survey. If, then, the Annexation is to be confined to Texas proper—and I think I shall be able to fully convince any unprejudiced mind that it must be—these United States will realize, at the utmost, but twenty millions of acres of refuse lands, at present of no value, and not likely to be of any until the country shall have a population as dense as that of Massachusetts. The reader will perceive, at once, that, as a matter of national speculation, we shall find, if the project of Annexation is successful, that, in the words of Franklin, “we have paid too dear for the whistle.”

## LETTER VII.

January 15.

Sir:—The act of the Congress of Texas, defining her boundary, passed Dec. 19th, 1836, reads as follows :

That from and after the passing of this act, the civil and political jurisdiction of this Republic be, and is hereby declared to extend to the following boundaries, to wit : beginning at the mouth of the Sabine river, and running west along the Gulf of Mexico three leagues from land, to the mouth of the Rio Grande—thence up the principal stream of the said river to its source—thence due North to the forty-second degree of North latitude—thence along the boundary line, as defined in the treaty between the United States and Spain to the beginning.

In the Treaty now before the Senate, the question of boundary is not alluded to—nor has it been touched upon, so far as I have seen, in any of the public documents connected with the negotiation. One would suppose that the extent of territory embraced in the proposed cession would be the first point discussed. Why is the plain question of the right of Texas to her assumed boundary sedulously avoided, by the friends of the measure ? They have presented annexation as a party question—and they still discuss it as such. Annex Texas, say they, and certain results will follow—and when the question is asked, What portion of North America is covered by it ?—they point you to the Act above recited, and the new maps of that country, and say—that is TEXAS. Fortunately for public justice and international rights, neither acts of Congress, nor the tools of an engraver, can convey a right, where none legally exists.

In the Declaration of Independence, made by the inhabitants, in March, 1836, it is expressly declared to be “*the declaration of the people of Texas.*” In every public document emanating from the assemblies of the people, prior and subsequent to that declaration, their jurisdiction is limited to Texas proper, or the department of Texas. Neither Coahuila, Chihuahua, or New Mexico, took part in the revolution. Not a battle was fought beyond the limits of Texas proper—nor has she ever had possession of a foot of the soil over which she has now, on paper, extended her jurisdiction. She has not, on the north, even the doubtful right of an assumed natural boundary, even though she should claim the Rio Grande on the south as such. In fact, her claim is based on no other foundation than her own act. She has no right from possession, conquest, concession, occupation, or the assent of the inhabitants. The jurisdiction is, and has ever been, in the States claiming the territory. By an act of Congress, passed in December, 1838, to raise troops for the defence of the frontier, the Neuces and Red river are named as the extreme outposts of her territory. To assume the position that the mere claim of Texas constitutes a right which she may convey to a third power, when that right has not a shadow of foundation in the prin-

ciples of international law, appears to me absurd. If the principle is to be allowed, why not make the annexation at least a decent speculation. The Texian Congress is now in cession. Let our Charge des affaires apply for the passage of an act, supplementary to the above, including Upper and Lower California within her boundary. With this addition, it might possibly be a national speculation, with all its incumbrances. For myself, I cannot conceive how the strongest advocates of annexation can, in any way, defend the claim of Texas to the territory beyond her original limits, as a department of Mexico. Were the territory which she thus claims, entirely, as it is partially, in the undisturbed possession of roving Indians, the claim would be doubtful—but, including as it does part of two States, and almost the whole of New Mexico, a population that has taken no part in her contest—that has been and still continues at open war with her—it does appear to me the height of absurdity to even give the claim a serious consideration. But we are told that the boundary is to be a subject of future negotiation. In other words, it is to be left to the Lion to secure the prey of the Jackall.

These United States, with a power capable of crushing Mexico at a blow, are to settle the question of the territorial right of Texas. Does any man, in his senses, believe that men, who have gone all lengths with the negotiation as a party measure—who have based their political faith upon its success—and who predicate future power, upon rendering the result acceptable to the mass of their party—will yield one foot of the soil so acquired, to so contemptible a power as Mexico? Not one man in one thousand, of the Loco Foco party, will ever stop to question our right to the assumed boundary. What Texas claimed will be the claim of the party—and, right or wrong, the administration will be compelled to submit. It is but folly to talk of public honesty and justice, when the price of both is the exclusion from the loaves and fishes of office. But let us look at another, and by far the most important light in which this subject can be placed. Can, or will Mexico negotiate a boundary with us, provided Texas is annexed? To answer this question, we must fully understand the character of the Mexican population, and its influence upon that government. Difference of religion, the influence of the priesthood, the war of the last nine years, and the compulsory enlistments in the army, for the several attempted invasions of Texas, have created, throughout Mexico, the most bitter hatred against the Texians. It has been the policy of Santa Anna, and his satellites, to increase this feeling to as great an extent as possible. Late events have transferred part of these feelings to the government and people of these United States. Grossly ignorant—acting only from impulse, or the fear of their superiors—the people are ever the ready tools of the ambitious and designing. A large portion of the popularity of Santa Anna may be attributed to his avowed enmity to Texas. The surrender of that department, or the attempt to negotiate for its surrender, would be the signal for a revolution that would overturn any adminis-



tration. Every Mexican believes his country to be the greatest and most powerful nation in the world—and the idea that these United States could successfully contend against them, would be to them an absurdity. No individual in power, in Mexico, would dare to entertain the idea of surrendering Texas—nor could such a surrender be obtained, except by force. With this character, of the material of which the nation is composed, it will be seen, at once, that any attempt at a peaceable negotiation, must fail. I mean these remarks as applying to the negotiation for the cession of Texas proper. But there is another, and yet more powerful objection. In the correspondence of our foreign ministers, in relation to the view that the great powers of Europe take of the proposed measure, the replies have referred literally to Texas, or Texas proper, as it is found on all the maps, excepting those got up for this occasion. Our government, and that of Texas, have carefully kept in the dark the fact that almost one entire State of the Mexican Confederacy, and a large part of two others, were included in these negotiations. When our Government shall attempt—as, in case of annexation, it most assuredly will—to obtain the assumed boundary, the transaction will assume an entire new feature in the eyes of France and England. They will be likely to return across the Atlantic the words of President Monroe—“That they cannot look with indifference upon any attempt to interfere with the policy of the Southern Republics.” It will be in the eyes of Europe, a dismemberment of the Mexican nation—a proceeding that will not be tamely submitted to. The three States, cut up by the assumed boundary, are the most important in the confederacy. They bear about the same relation to the Mexican confederacy that New York, Virginia, and Maryland bear to ours.

By the constitutional law, the Supreme Government have no power to cede any part of the territory of a State, without its consent, any more than our General Government would have the power to cede a part of Massachusetts. From what I have already said of the character of the people, it will be seen, at once, that the consent of these States could not be obtained. With Coahuila and New Mexico, it would be their almost total annihilation. Of course, under no circumstances could it be expected of them. If these opinions are correct—and that they are, I feel confident from much personal observation—we can acquire no claim from Texas that we can honorably enforce, beyond the territory embraced in her original limits—and the establishment of those limits, by treaty, is problematical. The attempt to establish her assumed boundary, could only be maintained at the expense of a war, and at the hazard of European interference—so that our possession, under any circumstances, must be a possession secured by force. I have thus, as I promised, briefly considered the question of boundary—and will, in my next, take up the subject of the holders of Texian Land Scrip.

## LETTER VIII.

January 21.

SIR:—The next point to which I would respectfully direct your attention, is—who are the holders of Texian Scrip and securities? In the answer to this question is involved the whole history of the project of Annexation. Up to the period of the revolution of Texas—and, in fact, up to the application of Texas, under the administration of Mr. Van Buren, for admission into the Union, our public journals were silent as to any claims of the United States upon her territory. The undefined limits of Louisiana, in the Spanish treaty of cession to France—and the vague manner in which the boundary is laid down in Mr. Jefferson's treaty for the purchase—might have left the question of right doubtful, had not subsequent treaties settled the question. The treaty with Spain, for the cession of Florida, contains an absolute abandonment, on the part of the United States, of all territorial claims south of the Sabine. The idea of *re-annexation* has answered its purpose, as a party humbug, in arousing the prejudices of political fanatics; but that it has ever been seriously advanced by a sound statesman, I very much doubt. The question of Annexation has not originated from any presumed national claim, nor from any particular sympathy, which we, as a people, feel towards Texas. Had she been unsuccessful in her struggle for independence, or had her independence been acknowledged by Mexico, on the return of Santa Anna after the battle of San Jacinto, the present question would never have been agitated in Congress. Even in its present position, it cannot be considered as an application on the part of Texas—nor does it appear to be required by her, as a means of prosperity or defence.

The causes of the agitation of this momentous project are to be sought for within the limits of our own territory, and among our own citizens. To illustrate my meaning, I will give a brief history of the speculations in Land Scrip. Prior to the revolution, the land titles issued by the Mexican authorities, under *Empressario* grants, were almost exclusively held by the inhabitants, and the military grants by the grantees, or by citizens of Mexico. The facility with which lands could be acquired by emigration, or with which they could be obtained from the States of Mexico, rendered them of little value. In the market of the United States, they were not a matter of speculation—at least where their value was known. The colonists, with Yankee shrewdness, saw, that while that state of things existed, the lands they had acquired would be valueless—that if even a nominal separation from Mexico could be brought about, and the continued accumulation of new titles be stopped, those then in existence would be immensely increased in value. Every inhabitant of the country, being from necessity a land-holder, was easily induced to join in measures of a revolutionary character. The contest once

commenced, the sympathy felt by us, as a people allied to them in blood and language, gave full assurance of their ultimate success. Their revolution commenced at a period unexampled in the annals of our country, for wild and visionary speculations. The repudiation of the *Empressario* and other grants of the State of Coahuila and Texas, made the then existing titles assume a value, in the eyes of speculators, far above their actual worth. Titles to an immense amount were readily disposed of, in the South and West—many of them manufactured expressly to meet the ready demand. The Bounty Lands given to those who joined the army, issued in the form of certificates, were sold to speculators to any extent. The battle of San Jacinto, and its astounding results, drew at once the attention of wealthy and influential men to the lands of Texas, selling, even as they then were, at one quarter of the price of our own public lands.

They saw, from the highly excited state of popular feeling, that the recognition of the Independence of Texas was morally certain—and that, in case of such recognition by these United States, an immense increase in the value of land would accrue—nor did they, for one moment, doubt that Mexico, humbled as she was, with her Chief Magistrate a prisoner, would tamely submit to the loss. Immense sums were, under these views, invested in Land Scrip. But what was the result? The influence of speculators upon Congress, seconded by the warm enthusiasm of the people, aroused at the success of a nation struggling for liberty, obtained the recognition of Texian Independence, in which we were rapidly seconded by both France and England. Contrary, however, to the general expectation, hostilities continued between Mexico and Texas. The interest on the public debt, incurred during her struggle—the necessary expenditures for her defence—required new and continued issues of Land Scrip. As an Independent Nation, it was soon seen that her revenue could not, for many years to come, be equal to her expenditure—and that, instead of the holders of Land Scrip being able to effect sales at a profit, the issues and grants of the Government were greater than the demand. In this state of things, the real and imaginary holders, at the South and West, saw that, unless some means were devised to stop the increase of Land Scrip by the Government, or of that which was in fact the same thing, the continued increase of the public debt for which the public domain was pledged—that they must inevitably sacrifice their property in the country. The only remedy for the difficulties under which Texas labored, was admission into the Union. That would at once give a value to the scrip and titles, equal to, if not greater than, the lands of these United States. The measure, apparently so tempting to our Government, and so profitable to them, was urged upon the Congress of Texas. As may be supposed, when the pocket of every member of that body was interested, the project found but few opponents. The offer was made. No definite action was then taken upon it—and, subsequently, it was withdrawn by Texas. Here let me request the reader to bear in

mind that, at this period, it was well known that there was not even a *respectable minority* of the people in favor of the measure; and that the offer was refused, by an administration avowing to be governed by the same general political principles as the party that have elected James K. Polk.

Since the withdrawal of the proposition, the people of Texas have become more and more impoverished, and the scrip and securities have been gradually losing value, until this second agitation of the question. The accidental accession of Tyler to the Presidency, and his evident determination to court the Democratic party, by open treachery to the party that had elected him—offered an opportunity of reviving the Annexation question. The policy of making another proposition for admission into the Union, was urged upon the Texian Government by many large landholders of the South. That Government, however, refused to repeat an offer that had so lately been treated with indifference. It did not object, however, to enter into negotiations, subject to the final ratification of the two Governments. To make the project a party question, and to identify it with Southern interests, by making it subservient to the extension of slave representation in Congress, was all that was necessary to insure the hearty concurrence of John Tyler. The immense quantity of floating scrip, good and bad, existing in the West and South, was well known by the leading Loco Foco politicians. The manner in which it could be brought to bear upon the Ballot Box, was equally well known. Under the idea that it would secure his nomination in the Convention at Baltimore, and make him the favorite candidate of the self-styled Democratic party, John Tyler was easily induced to commence the secret negotiations that resulted in the Treaty now before the Senate.

I have thus given a history of the views and operations of the holders of Texian lands. If it does not carry, in itself, intrinsic evidence of its truth, when compared with the facts and statements now before the public, no asseverations of mine could give it additional weight. It may be asked, why a large majority of this scrip should be found in the hands of the Democratic party? For, unless it is so, the position I have taken, I may be told, is not tenable. I shall, however, defer the answer until my next letter, as I have already exceeded my usual limits—and I shall also show, by the characters of the actors in this political drama, that *money*, and not *patriotism*, was originally the prompter of this Annexation movement.

## LETTER IX.

February 4.

SIR:—Shortly after the establishment of the Provisional Government, in November, 1835, Messrs. Austin, Archer and Wharton were despatched to the United States, as commissioners of Texas, for the purpose of negotiating, if possible, with our government, for assistance; and with full powers to contract loans, furnish munitions of war, and commission officers for the army and navy. Before leaving New Orleans for Washington, they contracted a loan of two hundred thousand dollars, upon the security of the public lands. With this sum was commenced the war with Mexico. An agency was established at New Orleans, with full powers to raise and equip a navy, accept the services of volunteers for the army, forward supplies, &c. This agency, from the distracted state of the country, and the difficulty of holding any communication with the actual government, became, *de facto*, for a time, the executive government of Texas—presenting the singular anomaly of a war, virtually conducted and supported by aliens, holding no allegiance to either party, and residing upon the territory of a nation at peace with both parties, and professing the most perfect neutrality. At the time of the establishment of this agency, Mexico had a fleet which commanded the Gulf. No aid could, with safety, be sent to Texas, unless she could be made superior to her enemies on the sea. Within three months, four heavy armed schooners were equipped, within sight of the Custom House at New Orleans—and, within four months, they drove into port, or destroyed, every Mexican cruiser. The loss of the command of the sea was the prime cause of all the disasters of Santa Anna, and the means of his eventual disgraceful defeat. In this bold and successful manœuvre, executed with a rapidity unexampled in history, lies the secret of the extraordinary success of the revolution of Texas. During the conflict, transports were continually leaving New Orleans, filled with armed volunteers. Munitions of war were openly purchased and shipped, and, in one case, an armed steamboat and three transports, with five hundred volunteers, under Gen. Green, fitted out and sailed from the Levee, directly in front of the Custom House, with drums beating, and Texian colors flying. These remarks are made to show the indirect support given by the administration of Gen. Jackson, to the revolt in Texas. To say that our government were ignorant of these movements, or had not the power to stop them, is absurd. The public favor shown to the cause, gave it, with Jackson men, the character of a party movement. The leading and opulent men of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, were, at that period, almost universally ranged under the Jackson flag. It was evident that both the administration and the party favored the revolution. They were confident that, with the power

of their party, whatever measures were determined upon must be successful. With these views, they could have no doubt of the eventual independence of Texas, and of her acknowledgment, as a nation, by these United States. They felt a confidence in her scrip and securities, which was not, and could not be felt by the other party. They invested largely in the country. The result and the effects of these investments, I have endeavored to explain, fully, in my last letter. Beyond the natural inferences to be drawn from political predilections, I have other and personal knowledge, from an acquaintance with the parties, to warrant me in asserting that a vast majority of the Land Titles of Texas are now in the hands of the Democratic party, so called. As a further illustration of this position, I would call the attention of the reader to the fact, that the project of Annexation has found its most zealous supporters among members of the old Jackson party—and that the most noted leaders in the project are not only Loco Focos, but are known to be large holders of the scrip. Having thus attempted to show, in the aggregate, who are the holders of Texian securities, I will now detain you, for a moment, with some of the details of the question I proposed to answer. The quantity of land under cultivation and use, in Texas, does not exceed three millions of acres. The quantity owned by citizens resident of that country, does not exceed seven millions. The quantity owned in Europe has lately been much increased, by conditional grants, made by the Texian Government, for the introduction of English, French, and German emigrants. These grants are not included in my former estimate of land claims. The nature of these grants has not yet transpired, nor the extent to which they have been completed. They will, no doubt, amount, when the contracts are fulfilled, to several millions of acres. The house of Baring, Brothers, & Co. are the owners of one million of acres, being the amount of a grant made by the Mexican government to Col. Milam. This grant, I believe, has never been located, and is not included in the Texian official schedule of grants. John Woodward, formerly of New York, has made a claim through the British government, for about two millions of acres, growing out of the vitiated Empresario contracts. His claim, however, is similar to that of the Land Companies named in my second letter, and is totally unfounded. Beyond these, there are but a few titles, and those small, held in Europe. As a rough estimate, I will give the whole amount held on the other side of the Atlantic, at seven millions of acres—leaving to be owned by citizens of the United States, nearly sixty millions of acres. I could, if circumstances required it, or I thought it advisable, give the names of distinguished individuals of the Loco Foco party, who are large holders of this property. The opponents of this measure, however, have too good a cause to require a descent to personality to sustain their position. I will here make a remark in regard to those who are the holders of these lands, which I think will have some influence on the public mind. We, as a people, cannot refrain

from feeling a deep sympathy for a nation, struggling to establish institutions based upon the same principles as our own. In the present case, we naturally associate in our minds the present population of Texas, and the presumed owners of her soil, with those who fought the battles of her revolution—with those who were massacred at Goliad—with those who gloriously fell at the Alamo—or who returned, in triumph, from the immortal field of San Jacinto. A large portion of our fellow citizens, actuated by the most noble and generous impulses, look upon the success of Annexation as the means of securing, to these bold pioneers of liberty, that for which they have so freely poured out their blood. I would have it distinctly understood, that it is not so. With here and there a solitary exception, a new race of men occupy the places of the revolutionary colonists. The Vandal speculators of the North have literally overrun the new republic. Of the whole number of those who constitute the present Government and Congress, there are only four names that stand prominent in her revolutionary history. Of the volunteers who entered her army, I am confident, not one hundred men are now within her limits. The certificates of bounty land, received for their services, have long since passed, for a mere song, into the hands of speculators. Of the old residents of Texas—men who, to forward the revolution, pledged every dollar of their property—there can scarcely be found one who is not in poverty, nor one who has not been compelled to sacrifice the very soil for which he fought, to relieve himself from pecuniary embarrassment. The bulk of the landed property of Texas is, at the present moment, in the hands of speculators and foreign emigrants, who had no lot or share in the struggle for liberty—property, which has cost them comparatively nothing—and which, should the project of Annexation succeed, will divide among them at least one hundred millions of dollars.

I notice that a resolution has been offered in Congress, calling upon the Executive to present official statements of the actual boundary of Texas, and of the claims upon her public domain—and, also, of the amount of her public debt. Should Congress conclude to defer the question, until they have before them such official documents, obtained from the government of Texas, it would be useless to expend paper and ink in the discussion of the measure—for the whole matter will descend to the “tomb of the Capulets.” The Texian government understand their own position too well to present any such official statements, even if they had the power or ability to prepare them—and this I know they could not do, with any degree of accuracy, without years of laborious investigation. So far as regards the public debt of Texas, the amount is unknown, even to the government itself. In my next letter I will give a statement of the *probable* amount, from her public documents and known expenditures

## LETTER X.

*February 7.*

SIR :—I propose, in this letter, to give a statement of the National Debt of Texas, its origin, and probable amount. However much that Government may feel disposed to answer the call of the House of Representatives upon this question, it is not, for reasons I shall hereafter give, in her power to exhibit anything like an accurate statement. You, sir, are well conversant with the position of the financial affairs of the original thirteen States of our confederacy,—immediately subsequent to the Revolution. The position of the finances of Texas is nearly similar. Great efforts have been made by the Government, under the present Constitution, to arrange and consolidate the public debt. To some extent they have been successful. Of the immense mass of claims that originated between the time of the dissolution of the first Convention of Delegates, and the battle of San Jacinto, while the country was virtually without an organized government, but few have ever been settled. Two attempts have been made, to examine into the validity of these claims, and to convert those passed upon into a funded debt. An act was passed in June, 1837, authorizing them to be funded, to the extent of three millions. In a few months that amount was settled, and the office closed. In January, 1839, an act was passed, appointing Commissioners to examine into the existing claims, and issue scrip to those who should prove their demands. Claims were presented, under the act, to such an enormous amount, that the executive ordered the office closed in the April following. What amount was funded, in that short period, has, I believe, never been made public—at least, there has never been, to my knowledge, any official report of the amount, made by the government. For the purpose of my calculation, I will place the amount of scrip issued under the act at three millions; although there is good reason to believe, from the manner in which the office was closed, that a much larger amount was issued. In November, 1836, an act was passed, authorizing a loan of five millions. Commissioners were appointed to proceed to the United States and Europe, to effect the loan. Only a small amount was obtained. In May, 1838, another act was passed, authorizing a loan of five millions, under provisions similar to the preceding act. Gov. Hamilton, of South Carolina, was one of the Commissioners for effecting it. Great exertions were made, and several acts were subsequently passed by Congress, to facilitate the action of the Commissioners. How far, or to what extent, they were successful, has never been promulgated. I have, however, good reasons to believe that the government was involved, in cash received, scrip issued, and expenses incurred, at least one million. By an act, passed December, 1836, the Executive was authorized to issue scrip to meet appropriations, to the extent of one million. By an act passed in June, 1837, the Executive was



authorized to issue promissory notes, to the extent of five hundred thousand dollars—in November, of the same year, two hundred and fifty thousand dollars—and in May, 1838, to an amount sufficient to meet the accumulated interest upon the public debt. How much was thus issued, for interest, is unknown. It could not, however, have been less than five hundred thousand dollars. Another act was passed, in the same month, authorizing an additional issue of one million, to meet appropriations. By an act, passed January, 1839, a loan of one million was authorized, to be made in the United States. This loan is said to have been effected, at an enormous sacrifice. In the same month, an issue of notes was also made, by act of Congress, of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. From the year 1836 to 1840, sundry acts were passed, authorizing the issue of scrip and treasury notes, to meet individual claims, in all amounting to about five hundred thousand dollars. Upon all these amounts, the government have been paying an interest of ten per cent. for an average of seven years. It will thus be seen that the amount of debts, drawn from the known official acts of Texas, is *twelve millions of dollars*—and the interest on the same, allowing the average of seven years, eight millions four hundred thousand. Making the enormous indebtedness of **TWENTY MILLIONS FOUR HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS**. It may be, that a small part of these appropriations of promissory notes were re-issues—but it does not appear that such was the fact, in the acts authorizing them. It is, also, well known, both in Texas and the States, that there are demands against the Government, to a large amount, which have never been funded—and which, of course, do not appear in any of her official acts or statements. To what extent they will be brought forward, in case of their assumption by our government, is uncertain. They may, however, with certainty, be set down at several millions.

The question will naturally be asked—How is it, that, in so short a contest—carried on principally by volunteers from these United States, who were never paid, to any extent, except in the certificates of bounty land—that such an immense debt should have been contracted? Texas commenced the contest without the materials of war, money, or credit. These facts were well known. The first issues of paper made were negotiated at a large discount. To purchase the munitions of war, she was obliged to pay, in her paper, a price increased equivalently to the extent of depreciation of that paper. This paper, as it increased in the market, became of less and less value. So great was its depreciation, that it could not be used at all, in purchases. The government was compelled, through agents, to sell its own promissory notes in the market, in many instances at a discount of fifty to seventy per cent., to meet its ordinary expenses. In this way, two or three prices were paid for every article purchased, either in Texas or this country. From the want of an organized system of finance, the most profuse and profligate expenditures were made, in many instances by assumed authority, which the government have

since, from circumstances, been compelled to confirm. It will, also, be borne in mind that, at no period since the revolution have the revenues of the country been equal to the civil expenditures of the government—that her debt has been, and is now, continually increasing in amount—and that it has not been the policy, nor for the interest of Texas, that the amount of her indebtedness should be publicly known. Thus no farther exertions have been made to ascertain the amount, than were absolutely necessary to answer the calls of her creditors. This statement of the public debt of the territory proposed to be annexed, is not given in a spirit of exaggeration, nor as an argument against annexation. I have no fears of its ever being assumed by our government, until the amount is distinctly ascertained, or the amount to be assumed is definitely settled. In the present position of the question, it can have but little weight in opposition to the measure. As a means, however, of gratifying public curiosity, it may, even in its dry details, be read with interest by those who are seeking for light upon this dark question.

There is one fact, in regard to the character of the public debt of Texas, which, in case of the assumption of any part of it by these United States, becomes a matter of serious consideration. The issues of the promissory notes of Texas, and that part of the funded debt predicated upon stock issued under the acts of June, 1837, and January, 1839, are but to a very small extent in the hands of the original holders. The uncertainty of the redemption of the notes, and the poverty of the original holders of demands, have caused them to be sacrificed for a trifling sum; and almost the entire amount of the stock that has been issued is now in the hands of speculators, who have paid but a small per centage upon the face of their certificates. How far it may be considered an act of justice to pay the full amount, and the large interest that has accumulated, when it was never contemplated, at the time of their issue, that they were predicated upon anything but the public faith of Texas, I leave to the friends of Annexation to determine.

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## LETTER XI.

*February 13.*

SIR:—I have observed, in many of the public documents connected with this question, and in the speeches delivered both in and out of Congress, that much importance is attached to the idea of the Rio del Norte being the natural boundary of these United States. Gen. Jackson, in his zeal to consummate this act of party frenzy, has advanced the opinion that the acquisition of Texas is absolutely

necessary to the security of the Southern States. Unfortunately for the quiet and welfare of our country, his opinions have influenced thousands of voters. At the time of the negotiation of the treaty for the cession of the Floridas, when in the full possession of those brilliant military talents, with which he was so eminently endowed, he avowed the belief, (in a letter to Mr. Monroe,) that the South and West had nothing to fear from an invasion, by the way of Texas. Why his opinions have been so materially changed, in so short a period, we are not informed. There has certainly been no change in the topography of the country—and, in relative position, the South has more ample means of defence now than she had then.

I propose to devote this letter to the discussion of the policy of seeking the Rio del Norte as a boundary. My remarks, at this time, will be confined to the actual position of the two countries. No movement has, as yet, been made in Texas, to form an alliance, or commercial connection, with any European power, giving that power exclusive privileges; nor have we at present any good reason to suppose that such is her intention. The present question, therefore, is—Is the acquisition of the present territory of Texas necessary for the future welfare or security of the Southern and Western States?

I will suppose, to illustrate my remarks, that Texas has been already annexed—and that the Rio del Norte, and a line running due north, from its sources, to the 42d degree of north latitude, is our boundary. What would then be the position of these United States, in case of a war with any of the large maritime powers of Europe? We have added to our now comparatively defenceless seaboard, three hundred and forty miles in extent, along the whole line of which there is not a single port in which one of our smallest sloops-of-war could find shelter from an enemy—a coast so indented with bayous and rivers, that it could not be sufficiently fortified to protect it from the ravages of an enemy, without appropriating our entire revenue for the next ten years.

From the character of the climate, in the vicinity of the Gulf of Mexico, there can never be a white population on the coast sufficient for its defence. The necessity and value of slave labor will forever give superiority in numbers to the African race. The attempts that would inevitably be made, by an enemy, to excite such a population to revolt, would require a stationary force greater than would be required for the defence of our whole Atlantic coast. Let us turn to the Rio del Norte—what is our position there? That river is navigable, for steamboats drawing from four to five feet of water, nearly seven hundred miles. Its western bank will be in possession of Mexico, a nation ever ready to sacrifice the integrity of her territory to the highest bidder. The probability of an enemy obtaining foothold in that country, from which to annoy us, (considering the character of the government and population,) is infinitely greater than that from Texas, as an independent nation. The past political history of Mexico warrants the belief that, were our territory on the Gulf

contiguous to hers, any of the large powers of Europe, at war with us, could, without difficulty, negotiate for a passage through, or the establishment of depots within her territory. The Rio Grande del Norte is a shallow stream, that can be forded by an invading army through nearly its whole extent. To defend its passage it would require a line of posts of at least five hundred miles in extent. If the reader will run his eye over the map, he will perceive that the course of the river is nearly parallel with the present boundary of the United States—and that, were the western bank in possession of an enemy, our extreme Western States would be in as much peril as the Southern—and, perhaps, more—as the South could only be invaded by way of the Red river, while the West offers an access by land, through the rolling lands North of that river. The brief remarks I have made, in regard to the defence of such a frontier, apply with equal force to smuggling, and the escape of runaway negroes. Along such a line of frontier, it is evident that neither could be prevented. With Texas, as an independent nation, arrangements could be made to stop smuggling, and insure the recovery of blacks; while with Mexico, as a non-slaveholding country, every slave that crossed the river would be lost.

I will now proceed to an examination of the present boundary of these United States, and endeavor to show its superiority, in all the points under which the friends of Annexation present that of the Rio Grande del Norte. First, in regard to its military position, as facilitating the means of defence for the South and West. The land on the eastern bank of the Sabine river, and from it to the Mississippi and Red river, is low and alluvial, intersected, in all directions, with creeks and bayous, and impassable by an invading army. The Southern States can only be approached, through Texas, by way of the Red river. There does not, now, exist any other internal communication, by which an army of one thousand men, without artillery, could be transported to the Mississippi. If, then, the Red river is the only possible point at which an invading army could reach us—or, at least, an army of such force as to cause a moment's apprehension—and that such is the fact no individual, having the least knowledge of the topography of the country, will deny—what have we to fear from such an invasion? Let us suppose that England had possession of all Texas, and was about to invade us with an army of fifty thousand men—suppose that they have reached the Red river, after a laborious march of four hundred miles from the sea coast, how are they to be transported down the river? The impediments in the navigation would prevent the use of steamboats, except of the smallest class; and so large a number as would be required could not be built within one year. Should they succeed in reaching the Mississippi, they must ascend or descend the river by water—and, unless they had the superiority upon that element, they would be utterly powerless.

Now, let us look for a moment at our means of resistance. The

mouth of the Red river can be so fortified as to prevent the passage of any force that may attempt to descend it. We have now on the Mississippi, and its tributaries, over six hundred steamboats; and can bring to the mouth of the Red river, in ten days, two hundred thousand men. Any military man can see, at a glance, as readily as General Jackson saw, in 1820, that an enemy, no matter what might be his force, would be perfectly at our mercy in such a position.

Let us now look, for a moment, at the two prominent grievances, set forth in such strong light by John Tyler, and for the relief of which, annexation is, in his opinion, so desirable. I mean, the escape of negroes, and the prevention of smuggling. There is, now, but one means of conveyance for slaves who may attempt to escape to Texas, (that is, by water) either in sail vessels, by sea, or in steamboats up the Red river. Both these are guarded against, by laws of so penal a character, that not two cases occur in a year—and, when they do occur, the government of Texas immediately surrenders them to the owners, even without an official requisition. With the Rio Grande as a boundary, they have but to wade across a narrow, shallow stream, and they are free. Now, they have but two avenues of escape, and those doubly guarded. Then, they will have some eight hundred miles of unguarded frontier. The plea of preventing smuggling is equally fallacious. The only points in Texas, at which it has ever been, or ever will probably be attempted, are on the Sabine or Red river. From the expense and labor of transportation from the sea coast, no European manufactures will ever be brought by the Red river. What there can be of the productions of Mexico, or Northern Texas, to smuggle, I leave the reader to determine. The only way in which it can be effected, on the Sabine, is by water—a means of conveyance always under the control of the Custom House. That part of the river that can be used for such a purpose is limited, and easily guarded. The avenues for the introduction of goods are few—and any invasion of the law easily detected. To remedy this evil—which, if it exists, exists but to a trifling extent—we are to substitute a river navigable to ten times the extent, and increase the facilities of smuggling a thousand fold. I have thus attempted to show that our present boundary is, for all purposes of National security, not only the best that could have been selected, but, in fact, the true natural boundary. At the time of its selection, the character of the soil between the Mississippi and the Sabine was unknown; had it have been known a more favorable selection could not have been made. Nature has given us a wall of defence upon our southern frontier, more efficient than the art of man could devise. While we remain within that wall, we shall be safe and united. Overleap it, and all may be lost.

## LETTER XII.

*February 15.*

SIR :—In my last letter I endeavored to show that the extension of our territory beyond our present boundary would have the effect of weakening the defensive powers of the Southern States. As I stated, at the commencement of the letter, my remarks were predicated on the present relative position of the two countries. That it would be more advantageous to these United States, that Texas should remain an independent republic, than to have her return under the government of Mexico, is a position that I think no one will question. It appears to me equally evident, that it is more for our interest, in every point of view, to allow her to remain as she is, than to annex her territory to ours. But the question is often asked,—can she support her independence? Can she, under her present debt and embarrassment, maintain her national existence, without seeking foreign protection? I am aware that, among our most prominent men, there are many who sincerely believe that she must, from necessity, seek a European alliance, should we refuse her admission into the Union—and that such an alliance would be dangerous, not only to our commercial prosperity, but to the future security of the South. It is a difficult subject, to attempt to discuss the probable policy that a nation, situated as she is, will pursue. It is, however, but fair to presume that, under any and all circumstances, she will maintain a distinct national character, unless subverted by a superior power. The strength of Texas lies in the weakness of Mexico. Unaided, Mexico can never recover her power over her lost territory. The history of both, for the last nine years, has amply demonstrated that such is the fact. The public debt of Texas, and the expense of constantly providing for the defence of her frontier settlements, against the incursions of the Mexicans and Indians, are now the only impediments to her civil and commercial prosperity. That she will be eventually compelled to repudiate a part, if not the whole, of her public debt, is certain—and the sooner she does it, the better it will be for her future prosperity. As it regards the existing war, whatever may be the result of the present question of Annexation, Mexico will be compelled, at no distant day, by the great Christian powers, to acknowledge her independence. So confident am I of this, that I believe it would long since have been accomplished, but for the intervention of the question of Annexation. Texas, of her own free will, will never enter into any foreign alliance that will compromise her nationality, especially with France or England. Such a movement is not consistent with the character of her population, nor would her proximity to us allow her to endanger her peace by such a measure. No foreign power, excepting these United States, could obtain a footing in Texas, except by force. Is there, then, any probability of an attempt, on the part of England, or France, to obtain

possession of Texas? With nations, as with individuals, there must be prominent motives for prominent actions. One of the motives presumed to actuate the powers named, and which has been exhibited in a strong light before the people, is the desire, on their part, to obtain the command of the Gulf of Mexico. Let us, for a moment, look at the position of Texas, and examine her facilities for the establishment of naval depots. The whole coast of Texas is formed by alluvial deposits, and sands thrown up by the action of the sea. It is uniformly low, and dangerous to approach, and swept by irregular and dangerous currents. The quicksands thrown up by the action of the waves, form uncertain and dangerous bars at the entrance of all her rivers and harbors. The coast is also subject to sudden and violent gales, which render it dangerous for ships of any size to anchor in the offing, except at particular seasons. The port of Galveston, the best in the republic, will not admit a ship, under the most favorable circumstances, drawing over twelve and a half feet of water—nor is it at any time considered perfectly safe, with a draft of over eleven feet. Galveston Island, upon which the city is situated—a low sand bank, its highest elevation not three feet above the level of the sea—forms the only protection to the harbor, from the east. On the north, a shoal of sand, level with the water, called Pelican Island, forms the only protection from the *Northerns*, which have a sweep down the bay, of thirty-five miles. A bar crosses the bay, twenty miles up, having upon it only four feet of water. The water, upon each side of the bay, is shoal—being not over four to six feet. Galveston Island is the only position in the bay, where a Naval Depot could be located—and that is every year liable to an overflow of the sea. No arrangement can ever be made to safely haul down, and repair, the hull of a vessel, from the continual shifting of the sand on the shore of the Island. The bar, at the entrance of the harbor, is formed of a lively quicksand, which has, thus far, proved the total destruction of every vessel that has grounded upon it. The bar, at Sabine bay, has only six feet of water—the port at the west of Galveston Island, seven feet—the mouth of the Brassos river, five feet—Matagorda bay, eight feet—Aransaso bay, ten feet—and the mouth of the Rio Grande, eight feet of water.

Such are the facilities, offered by the coast of Texas, for a naval station. Will any man, of the least judgment in such matters, countenance the idea that the possession of these ports, by any maritime power, would give that power command of the Gulf of Mexico? The only nation that could possibly be supposed to desire such a possession, is England—and the friends of Annexation have delusively held up this idea, for the purpose of making political capital, until they have, apparently, come to the belief that England seriously entertains the intention of obtaining Texas for such a purpose. Let us look, for a moment, at the situation of England, in regard to her naval superiority in the Gulf—and then ask the question, is the possession of Texas necessary or even desirable to her? At the South,

she has the Island of Jamaica—at the North, Bermuda—in the centre, the ports of Cuba, which she can, at her pleasure, command. On the Western shore of the Gulf, she has the port of Belize, Honduras, and a port on the Mosquito shore, lately ceded to her, which is said, by good authority, to be one of the best in the world, and capable of riding at anchor all the navies of Europe. So far is she from seeking new possessions in the Gulf, that she has, for the last thirty years, neglected her own colony of Honduras—a colony, capable, by the patronage of the government, of raising a large part of the cotton she consumes. What possible reasons can she have, then, to desire the possession of Texas? I think I have clearly shown that, as a naval position, it would rather weaken than strengthen her power. I can see no reason, on her part, for such a wish, except it be the desire to obtain a territory that might, in time, render her independent of these United States, in her supplies of cotton. To put that question, at once, at rest, it is only necessary to state that a vast majority of the Cotton Lands of Texas are of no value, without slave labor—and that, in the possession of England, and cultivated by free labor, Texas can never compete with the Southern States, in the production of cotton. So strongly am I persuaded of the correctness of this opinion, that I believe it would be most decidedly for the interest of the South to have slavery abolished in Texas, and thereby secure to themselves the monopoly of cotton in the European markets.



### LETTER XIII.

*February 22.*

**STR:**—In the several letters I have presented to the public, I have, as I stated in my first number I should do, confined myself to an exposition of facts; giving only such slight illustrations as I deemed absolutely necessary to a clear understanding of my meaning. The probable effect of annexation, upon the future political history of our country, has been so thoroughly discussed, by the ablest men of our nation, that any attempt, on my part, to advise or counsel, might well be considered as presumption. I commenced these letters under the impression that I could lay before the public information upon this all-absorbing question, which could not be derived from any other source. The answer of the Executive to the call of the House of Representatives for information in regard to the debt and public lands of Texas, has already proved that my impressions were correct. I have but little fear, whatever may be the result of this question, that any of the statements I have made will ever be questioned or contradicted.



It is my intention, in this letter, to deviate somewhat from the course I have laid down. The subject, however, requires it—and I trust that will be a sufficient excuse. The subject of slavery, to which I am about to allude, as involved in the question of Annexation, is one of fearful importance to the Free States. It has been presented to the public, in its general bearing upon our social institutions, in so clear and strong a light, that if we could divest the public mind of political bias, we should hardly find a voice raised in its defence. There is one point, however, in which it has not yet been exhibited—a point, too, which has a strong bearing, not only upon the present question, but upon the final extinction of slavery within the Union. I allude to the facilities for its unlawful increase in the territory of Texas. In Texas there are, at the present time, from twenty-five to thirty thousand slaves. Nearly that number has been returned, as taxable property. How came they there? The Constitution prohibits their introduction, except from these United States. Has that number been transported from the South? It is in the power of Congress to obtain information on *this* point, at least. Let them apply to the Collectors of New Orleans, Mobile and Charleston, and ascertain the number that have been cleared from those ports. It will be found that not one-third of the number now there, ever saw these States.

Prior to the revolution, there were, legally, no slaves in Texas. Immediately subsequent to that event, the public returns rated the number at about five thousand. Can it, for a moment, be believed that, in seven years, the natural and imported increase could exceed twenty thousand? To answer the question how they came there, I will refer to facts well known in Texas. *A direct trade in slaves has been carried on between Cuba and Texas*; in the early part of her history, almost openly—latterly, in secret. Two full cargoes were obtained in Havana in 1836, and landed in Texas, under the following circumstances: It is the practice of the British Government to apprentice, for a limited time, the slaves captured and carried into Cuba. These apprentices were, under some pretence, purchased at a trifling price, and shipped to Texas. There they were sold as slaves—nominally for a given time, but in fact for life—and they and their descendants are now slaves forever. To what extent the trade has been carried on, can only be judged from circumstances. The immense profit that it offered, and the facilities of landing them on the coast, would lead to the belief that it has been practiced to a great extent. If one can judge by the number of fresh negroes to be found upon the plantations in Texas, the importation must have been large indeed. From this source, alone, could have been realized the great increase of slave population in that country. As it can be made a matter of perfect demonstration what number have been exported from the South, and as there were originally no slaves there, it can be ascertained, at short notice, should Congress require it, what number of negroes, not natives of these

United States, would be brought into the Union by Annexation. It would not be understood as implicating the government of Texas in this piratical introduction of negroes, as I know strong measures have been constantly used to prevent it. Nor do I believe her citizens have, to any great extent, countenanced the trade—it having been principally perpetrated by aliens. The fact, however, that the negroes are now in the country, is sufficient—and the proof that no legal restraint could prevent their introduction, is a strong argument against the admission, to our Union, of a territory so open to the gratification of piratical cupidity.

There is, also, another way in which negroes have been, and may be now, *legally* introduced into Texas from other sources than this country. By the existing treaty between France and that country, France is entitled to all the rights and privileges which Texas has granted, or may grant, to the most favored nations. By this treaty, which was formerly ratified by the authorities of Texas, negroes can be introduced from the French Colonies, in the same manner they are now introduced from our Southern States. I may be answered that the Constitution expressly provides that slaves shall only be introduced into Texas from these United States, and that the treaty stipulation would be void as against the Constitution. I answer that it was distinctly understood, at the time of the negotiation, that this privilege would accrue to the French Colonies; and it was one of the inducements offered by Texas to the French Government, to obtain the acknowledgment of her independence. All are aware of the desire of France to extinguish slavery in her colonies; and that the only impediment to its accomplishment is the amount of indemnification money required. A market that would drain off the blacks from her West India possessions and facilitate emancipation, was a *desideratum* not to be lost. The fact that this privilege would be granted, under the provisions of the Treaty, was well understood in Texas, at the time of its ratification. Its unconstitutionality cannot now affect the existing rights of France. I am not aware of the extent to which blacks have been introduced into Texas, from the French Colonies, but I have good reason to believe that many have been so introduced.

In the discussion of this question, in the House of Representatives, the argument has been used, that in the admission of Texas, we only take back slaves that were originally from these States. The fact that there were other slaves in the country, and in much greater number than those shipped from our slave States, appears never to have entered the minds of the opponents of the measure. In truth, the practical effect of Annexation upon the question of the extension of slavery, has been lost in the speculations upon slave representation. To illustrate this remark, I will now proceed to show the facilities that will arise from Annexation, in the introduction of new slaves. Slave property, from the ease with which it can be transported, will always find the highest market. The low prices

at which such property is now held in the French and Spanish Colonies, and the high price it will command in Texas, should she be admitted into the Union, will open, at once, an illicit trade in negroes. The laws of these United States, as they now stand, could not prevent it, from the impossibility of carrying them into execution. As I have already shown, in the description of the sea coast of Texas, that it is so intersected and cut up by bayous and inlets, that no force that could be employed, could prevent such a trade. Whole cargoes could be landed, by boats, in a single night, and placed beyond the pursuit of a naval force, before morning. The whole line of coast, from Matagorda Bay to the Rio Grande, is not only open to such a trade, but invites it, from the absolute security it offers against detection or apprehension. To say that such a trade would not be carried on, where the profits offered would be so immense, is to argue against all experience. Thousands could be found, even of our own citizens, depraved enough to embark in it, to any extent. A gain, the whole line on the Rio Grande would become one vast slave market. To those acquainted with the revolting system by which personal labor is held in Mexico, and the absolute degradation in which three quarters of the population are placed, I need not attempt to show that every facility would be offered to such a trade, and that even Mexican citizens would often, by indirect means, be sold into slavery. Let us look, for a moment, at the ease with which such a trade could be carried on. A cargo of freshly imported negroes could be obtained in Cuba, under cover of the apprentice system, with the avowed intention of transporting them to Mexico. They are landed on the Mexican Bank of the Rio Grande, and marched into the interior. The laws of Mexico would guarantee their labor and possession to the speculator. He could transport them, at his pleasure, over the river, and sell them under indentures, as he purchased them, or even for life. In either case they would eventually, with their descendants, become the absolute property of the purchaser. Who is there, under such circumstances, to contest the right of the master to his slave? Let any one who doubts that such a trade could be safely and profitably carried on, look into the laws of Mexico, affecting master and servant. Let him cast his eye over the map of the country, and he will be fully satisfied. Time will not permit me to digress from the subject, more fully to explain my meaning in this respect.

I may be asked why slaves cannot be introduced in a similar manner, into our own territory, through Texas, even should she remain separate? I answer, that, from the fact of all our slaves being natives, they could be immediately detected; besides, the value of slaves in Texas will be, for many years, greater than in these United States.

## LETTER XIV.

March 1.

SIR:—Should Texas continue an independent nation, the fertility and low price of her lands would render slave labor of greater value than it ever could attain in the Southern States. The unsettled state of the country has, alone, prevented an immense importation of slaves. For the last five years, an able-bodied man has been worth, in Texas, from two to four hundred dollars more than in Louisiana. While such is the case, no one can doubt that, at no distant period, Texas would so drain off the blacks from those States where their labor is not productive, that they would soon become free States. Among those that would be thus operated upon, we may class Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and Kentucky. Such an effect would be experienced, should Texas be admitted into the Union. But the result, in the two cases, would widely differ. The addition of four slave States to the Union would give a permanency to the policy of slave representation, which would act as a check upon the abolition of slavery in those States, even, which might, under other circumstances, be desirous of the measure; as they would hesitate to throw themselves, by the act of abolition, from the majority into the minority.

Emigration to Texas, as a separate government, would be repulsive to the minds of thousands, who would seek it as an *El Dorado*, if admitted as a part of our Union. In one case, the master would alone seek a price and a market for his slaves—while, in the other, he would seek a more favorable location for them and himself. In the one case, free would gradually take the place of slave labor, without materially impoverishing the State—while, in the other, the lands would be depopulated, without a probability of a substitution of free labor. To illustrate this, let us take a practical view of the effects of annexation upon a single State. I will take, for example, one of the most ultra in the measure, South Carolina. How many of her planters would expatriate themselves, by emigrating to Texas, as an independent nation? Not one in a thousand. Admit her into the Union, and the face of things is to them materially changed. We will suppose a planter has five hundred acres of land, and one hundred negroes—that he values his land at thirty dollars per acre, and his slaves at five hundred dollars each. He can obtain land in Texas, under the same government and institutions, of treble the actual value, for cultivation, at one dollar per acre. The value of the labor of his slaves will be more than doubled, by the quality and value of their production. The excess in value of the land which he sells, over that which he purchases, he can invest in new hands, and immensely increase his productive capital. Suppose his plantation incumbered, as most of them are, such a change would be a

perfect God-send to him. Will not such an opportunity be improved by all the young and enterprising planters of the State? It has already, under the unfavorable circumstances in which Texas has been placed, been improved to a great extent; and most probably would be, to an extent that would beggar the State. How is the soil, made vacant by emigration, to be again occupied? Certainly not by free labor, while the State continues to uphold slavery. Nor will it be occupied again by slave-holders, for they cannot compete with the productions of Texas. It must lie vacant, and the State be proportionally impoverished. These remarks apply, with equal force, to all the slave States, with the exception of Mississippi and Louisiana. If the loss of the most valuable part of the population of these States would be likely to abolish or ameliorate slavery, we might look upon such a result with indifference—but it will have no such effect. The preponderance of slave representation, even under such circumstances, will be maintained at any cost. The shackles of party will be more firmly riveted than ever—and the South, regardless of the actual causes of her depression, will continue to attribute it to the prosperity of the North, acquired at her expense—and that jealousy, which is now marring our prospects as a nation, will be increased a hundred fold.

The fact, that the Annexation of Texas will materially reduce the value of real property in the Southern States, appears not to have attracted the attention of the friends of the measure—and yet, it is one that should have great weight. I conversed, some time since, with a planter, who, about three years previously, had sold out his plantation in Alabama, and settled on Caney Creek, in Texas. He told me that he had sold his plantation at a good price, for negroes, and had purchased his present land at two dollars per acre. In his present location, he could raise double the quantity of cotton, and of a better quality, with the same number of hands. There was less risk in the crop, than in the best land in the States; and the climate was as favorable to the health of the blacks as that of Alabama. Some of the planters, formerly his neighbors, were on the point of joining him; and would do so at once, if Texas was annexed to the States. There is but little doubt that, if the objection of locating under another government was removed, thousands of our Southern planters would remove, with their slaves, to Texas. The effect, upon some of our Southern States, would be immense; not only in the depreciation of the value of land, but in the prostration of every branch of industry. Among a free white population such difficulties are soon overcome, by the elastic industry of the people—but, in a slave State, it is far different. Such shocks to the public welfare are seldom, if ever, recovered from. These views of the effect and extent of emigration, in case of annexation, are not a matter of speculation. The past history of the settlement of Texas is sufficient proof that they will be more than realized.

The next point, to which I would call your attention, is the trade

of Texas. Much has been said on the policy of securing that market for our manufactures, and of the fear that England may secure to herself the trade of that country, by the offer of commercial privileges. I acknowledge, not only the policy, but the necessity of our obtaining the market of Texas for our manufactures—but, will the annexation of her territory to this Union insure the consumption of our fabrics to a greater extent than she would consume them as an independent nation? If her political position is materially to affect her consumption, the friends of annexation should show how, and in what manner—and yet, we hear nothing from them, but mere assertion. If Texas was in a position to admit the introduction of foreign manufactures free of duty, or to grant to any nation a monopoly of her market, there might be some cause of fear—but, as she is burthened with a heavy debt, and, by her location, completely under our control, we are secure at least of a fair competition in her market. In the expense of transportation, we have largely the advantage of other nations; and, in a similarity of tastes and associations, the strongest promptings to commercial intercourse. To show the practical results of Annexation upon the commerce of the United States, it will be necessary to go into an examination of the present trade of Texas, to which I will devote my next letter.

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## LETTER XV.

*March 15.*

Sir:—The trade of Texas was exclusively with these United States, prior to 1840. Nearly the whole was with the port of New Orleans. The goods shipped were such as are usually consumed by planters, with the exception of Tobacco, and a few other articles, intended to be smuggled into Mexico. Prior to the revolution, nearly the whole business of the country was transacted on the Brassos river. In the winter of 1834-5, one small vessel, of forty tons, did all the transportation between New Orleans and Galveston bay. Galveston Island, where the city now stands, was a barren sand-bank, with but one hut upon it. In fact, no chart of the bay had ever been made; and its depth of water was only inferred, from the knowledge that the pirate, Lafitte, had made it a rendezvous for his vessels. The country was poor—but little money in circulation—and the manufactured

articles consumed were of the coarser kinds. The immense influx of emigration, subsequently to the revolution, and the establishment of the towns of Houston and Galveston, created, as it were by magic, a large commercial trade. The attention of the merchants of France and England was directed to the trade of Texas. Several English vessels were sent to Galveston freighted with bulky articles, for the purpose of obtaining cargoes of cotton. The arrival of these vessels was hailed as an era in the history of the new republic. The speculation of a few merchants was heralded as a national demonstration—and the utmost was made of it, by those then interested in the contemplated project of Annexation.

The result of these voyages was disastrous to those interested. The articles they imported could not be sold, in the quantities brought, except at immense sacrifices. No conveniences were to be had, for screwing or packing cotton, and no facilities for loading; and, from the total want of any banking institutions, the factors were compelled to purchase their articles with ready money, and in small parcels. The voyages, in every instance that came to my knowledge, were ruinous. Many of these difficulties were, undoubtedly, incident to a new country, and may be obviated as the country advances—but there are others that never can be obviated, and which will effectually prevent a direct trade to Europe. I will state them, as they occur to me. The first and most important, is the shallowness of the entrance, the dangerous bar, and insecure anchorage of Galveston bay. No vessel of over three hundred tons, however favorably built for draught of water, can safely enter it. It is well known that vessels of that class cannot be profitably employed in the transportation of cotton to Europe, at any thing like the present rates of freight. If a bounty was to be granted, by the British Government, of a penny per pound upon Texas cotton, it would hardly equalize the difference of the cost of transportation, between such vessels and our large freighting ships. The bulk of all the cotton lands of Texas is south of Galveston. In fact there is but little land on the tributary waters of the bay, that is suitable for the culture of cotton. There being no port, at the south, that will admit a vessel of any burthen, the article must be sent to a port of lading by water. If so sent, the expense would be less to send it direct to New Orleans, than to Galveston.

Another objection to a direct trade with Europe, is that, allowing the entire consumption to be of the manufactures of Great Britain, it would require but a small amount of tonnage to transport the supply, in comparison with that required to export her cotton. Consequently as the ships must come out comparatively empty, the expenses against the return freights would be greatly increased. But to understand the subject clearly, let us look into the character of the consumers, and the nature of the manufactured articles consumed. Our Southern States have never been (in comparison with their population) consumers of manufactures, to an extent any thing like

those of the North. We seldom hear of importing houses, located in slave States; and never, unless they are in cities which have become, by position, depots for the business of free States. The slave population are seldom consumers of foreign fabrics; and the demand for the white population, in slave states, is less than for the same number in a free State. Large as have been the exports of our Southern States, they have been compelled to depend upon the North for their foreign goods. It is but fair to presume that Texas, as a slave State, will be similarly situated. The demand for the finer fabrics will, for many years, be extremely limited in Texas. The principal articles consumed, along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, will be negro clothing, provisions, tools, cotton bagging, rope, &c. These articles will be obtained where they can be had cheapest—and there can be no question that we can supply them cheaper, and of a better quality, than any European nation. Placing the direct trade between Texas and Europe under the most favorable circumstances, the consumption of European manufactures must be, for a long time, confined to the sea coast. The rivers that penetrate the interior are tributary to the Mississippi—and our means of communication must forever secure to us that portion of her trade. In regard to the Santa Fe trade, upon which much has been said, I will make but one remark—the possession of Texas will not benefit us in that respect. Although the distance from Galveston to Santa Fe is less than from St. Louis to Santa Fe, yet the distance from St. Louis could be travelled in one half the time, and at half the risk and expense. A railroad may be laid from St. Louis, but never can be from the Gulf of Mexico. These are some of the reasons why a direct trade can never be advantageously carried on between Texas and Europe. What are we, then, to gain, in a commercial view, by Annexation? Under any circumstances in which Texas may be placed, we must supply her with all the articles that she requires, which we can sell cheaper than she can bring them across the Atlantic. We do this, and no more, in our own slave States. If South Carolina can import cotton bagging cheaper than she can get it from Kentucky, she will do so; and it will be so with Texas, annexed or not annexed. The idea that Texas will give a monopoly of her market to England, or any other nation, is absurd. Bad as her population has been represented to be, they are neither fools nor madmen.

With these few desultory remarks upon trade, I will close this series of letters on Annexation. I believe I have performed all I promised, in my introduction. I have endeavored to condense, as far as possible, the information it was in my power to give, upon this momentous question, and to avoid exhibiting any thing like party feeling. The remarks I have made are the result of seven years connection with the trade and affairs of Texas, and an intimate acquaintance with her population. So far as my personal feelings are connected with Texas, I desire, and would contribute all in my power, to advance her prosperity. As an independent nation, she will, at no dis-



tant day, assume a high rank. As a part of our Union, she will sink into comparative insignificance. The annexation of Texas, if consummated, would, personally, benefit me; for I am largely interested, both in her lands and serip. Yet I cannot, even by my silence, approve of it; for I view it as a measure disgraceful to my country, and sowing the seeds of civil commotions that will one day shake this Union to its centre. These letters have been written as I could find leisure, without revision or study. They contain, as I believe, an unadorned statement of facts. To what extent they may influence the public mind, I leave to time to determine. If they can, even in the smallest degree, awaken my fellow citizens to the national peril involved in the question, I shall be amply compensated for my labors. The only proof that I can offer of my sincerity in the opinions I have advanced is, that I have labored in secret, without the hope of fame or reward—that I have much to lose, and nothing to gain, by the course I have pursued. With my thanks to the proprietors of the Atlas, for the large space in their columns which they have, from time to time, so generously allowed me,

I am, sir, very respectfully, &c.,

LISLE.





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